

SENATE BILL REPORT

SJR 8208

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Transportation, February 13, 2007

Brief Description: Amending the state Constitution by requiring toll facility or operation revenue to be used solely for the facility or operation.

Sponsors: Senators Haugen and Swecker.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Transportation: 1/29/07, 2/13/07 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Joint Resolution No. 8208 be substituted therefor, and the substitute joint resolution do pass.

Signed by Senators Haugen, Chair; Murray, Vice Chair; Swecker, Ranking Minority Member; Berkey, Clements, Delvin, Eide, Holmquist, Kastama, Kauffman, Kilmer, Pflug and Spanel.

Staff: Kelly Simpson (786-7403)

Background: Under current law, no tolls may be imposed on new or existing highways or bridges without specific legislative authorization, or upon a majority vote of the people within the boundaries of the unit of government empowered to impose tolls. Although current law does authorize certain special purpose districts to establish tolls, the Washington Transportation Commission acts as the general tolling authority in the state. However, except for a few specific tolled facilities (e.g., state ferries, SR 167 HOT lanes, and the Tacoma Narrows Bridge), state law does not specifically address the disposition of revenue from tolled facilities.

The Washington Transportation Commission recently issued a comprehensive tolling study, in which it recommended that "[t]oll revenue should be used only to improve, preserve, or operate the transportation system."

Summary of Bill: All revenue from a tolled facility or operation authorized by a public entity must be used only to support or benefit the facility or operation. "Facility or operation" is defined as: (1) a bridge, highway, or roadway; (2) a vessel, bus, or other conveyance of people or goods; or (3) a system of facilities or operations as defined by the tolling authority.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY RECOMMENDED SUBSTITUTE AS PASSED COMMITTEE (Transportation): Technical changes were made to better conform with the underlying intent of the joint resolution.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect upon ratification by the majority of voters at the next general election.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This is a good idea to send to the voters so that they can make the choice whether to direct tolls to transportation projects.

OTHER: The current language is too narrow. The language should reflect the broader language recommended in the Washington Transportation Commission's tolling study that directs tolls to the transportation system. Also, demand management should be allowed as a permissible use of tolls.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Dick Ford, Washington Transportation Commission.

OTHER: Genesee Adkins, Transportation Choices Coalition.